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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SO](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: Somalia - "Faroole" Reluctantly Releases Journalist

REF: NAIROBI 17

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs, State Department, Somalia Unit; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Puntland President "Faroole," as a result of pressure by the Embassy and by Puntland and clan leaders, on January 5 released VOA reporter Mohammed Isaq. (Note: Isaq was detained on December 21. End note.) Our contacts tell us that "Faroole" reluctantly released Isaq after being pressured by members of the Puntland administration and clan leaders. Isaq, during a January 6 telecon, told the Somalia Unit he was threatened while in prison and now feared for his life. Contacts are hearing rumors of an imminent Puntland cabinet reshuffle aimed at removing those attempting to rein in "Faroole." On January 6 the Somalia Unit urged VOA to consider options to protect Isaq. All parties are working to assess the level of danger Isaq might face. We are encouraging respected and credible members of the Puntland administration and Puntland civil society to continue their efforts to contain "Faroole's" destructive behavior. End summary.

¶2. (C) On January 5, Puntland Administration President "Faroole" reluctantly released VOA journalist Mohammed Isaq, after days of pressure by the Embassy was supplemented by pressure from members of the Puntland administration and clan leaders. (Note: Key Puntland Ministers, including the Ministers of Gender, Security, Health and the Deputy Minister of Information, have participated in recent meetings focused on how to rein in "Faroole's" destructive behavior (reftel) End note.)

¶3. (C) In a January 6 telecon, Isaq told the Somalia Unit that he had been threatened while in prison and now feared for his life. Isaq said that while in prison he was told he should leave Puntland. Isaq told us that his brother had instructed him to travel from Bossaso to Garowe in order to meet with members of his clan, and to talk to no one along the way. Isaq said he did not feel safe in any part of Puntland. (Note: Isaq was shot and wounded by Puntland security officials on November 18 at a vehicle checkpoint in Puntland. We do not know if the shooting was related to unhappiness his reporting has caused in "Faroole's" inner circle. End note.)

¶4. (C) Against the backdrop of processes underway inside the Puntland administration and with the clans to mitigate "Faroole's" influence (reftel), contacts tell us they are hearing rumors of an imminent Puntland cabinet reshuffle. Our contacts think the reshuffle, if it occurs, will be aimed at removing key figures

attempting to rein in "Faroole".

15. (C) Comment: On January 6 we spoke to VOA and urged them to consider options to protect Isaq. In addition, we are encouraging respected and credible members of the Puntland Administration and of Puntland civil society to continue their efforts to contain "Faroole's" destructive behavior. While we welcome Isaq's release, the state of freedom of the press in Puntland continues to deteriorate. We will remain engaged with Puntland leadership on the subject of press freedom.
RANNEBERGER